IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the pending claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for interactively and electronically distributing rewards and for increasing the click-through rate for advertisements, comprising the steps of:

displaying an advertising image on a computer screen of a local computer, the image including a reward indicator, wherein the local computer is coupled to a computer network;

enabling a user to select the advertising image;

at a central location coupled to the computer network, seamlessly determining the identity of the user when said advertising image is selected;

at the central location, automatically allocating a reward associated with the advertising image ~~when~~ after and in response to said advertising image ~~is~~ being selected, wherein said allocating step includes

> storing a reward identifier with the identity of the user in a
> central database, said reward indicator identifying a
> promotional incentive, said central database being accessible by
> the user enabling the user to view a list of rewards that have
> been allocated to the user; and

optionally redirecting the local computer to a webpage associated with the image.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of determining the identity of the user further comprises the steps of:

determining if the local computer comprises a cookie storing an ID number indicating the identity of the user; and

providing the ID number to the central location.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of determining the identity of the user further comprises the steps of:

determining if the local computer comprises a cookie storing an ID number indicating the identity of the user;

if there is no cookie storing an ID number at the local computer, asking the user to input an ID number;

providing the ID number to the central location; and

checking the validity of the ID number at the central location.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of determining the identity of the user further comprises the steps of:

determining if the local computer comprises a datafile storing an ID number indicating the identity of the user and providing the ID number to the central location;

if there is no datafile storing an ID number at the local computer, asking the user to provide a pre-assigned ID number;

if the user does not have a pre-assigned ID number, collecting information from the user and thereafter allocating an ID number to the user; and

if an ID number is provided to the central location, checking the validity of the ID number at the central location.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the computer network is the Internet and the central location is a webserver coupled to a database, the step of redirecting further comprising the steps:

providing the local computer with an address of a website comprising the content associated with the image;

causing a browser program at the local computer to navigate to the website.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5 wherein the step of allocating to the user a reward associated with the image further comprises the steps of:

storing a reward identifier in the central database associated with the user; and

optionally causing a message to be displayed to the user at the local computer

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informing the user of the reward allocated to the user.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5 further comprising the steps of:

allowing the user to access the central database via the Internet; and

providing to the user, via the Internet, a list of rewards that have been allocated to the user.

8. (Original)   The method of claim 7 further comprising the steps of:

allowing the user to select a reward from the list of rewards;

providing the local computer with an address of a promoter website comprising the content associated with the reward;

causing a browser program at the local computer to navigate to the promoter website; and

enabling the user to redeem the reward at the promoter website.

9. (Original)   The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of expiring the redeemed reward.

10. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 5 further comprising the steps of:

allowing the user to visit a promoter website and engage in a transaction;

allowing the user to indicate that the user desires to redeem a reward;

passing control to the webserver;

providing to the user, via the Internet, a list of applicable rewards that have been allocated to the user as stored in the central database;

allowing the user to select a reward from the list of applicable rewards;

causing a browser program at the local computer to navigate to the promoter website; and

redeeming the reward at the promoter website.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10 further comprising the step of expiring the redeemed reward.

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12. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the imaged displayed on the computer screen comprises text.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of displaying an image on a computer screen of a local computer comprises displaying an image on a computer screen of a local computer, the image not comprising a reward indicator.

14. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein the step of asking the user to input an ID number comprises the step of obtaining a unique identifier from a physical memory device.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the physical memory device is one of a magnetic stripe card or smartcard.

16. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 1 <u>wherein the advertising image is a banner advertisement on a webpage and wherein the reward is not stored on the local computer.</u>~~further comprising the steps of~~
~~allowing the user to print the reward at the local computer;~~
~~enabling the user to redeem the reward at a physical location.~~

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for interactively and electronically distributing and redeeming rewards via a computer network and to increase click-through rates for advertisements, the computer network coupled to a user computer and a central computer, the central computer coupled to a database <u>which is located centrally and not located at the user computer</u>, the computer network also coupled to a plurality of promoter computers, the method comprising the steps of:

at the user computer, displaying an advertising image comprising a reward indicator;

enabling a user to select the advertising image;

at a central computer, determining the identity of the user;

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at the central computer, automatically allocating to the user a reward associated with the reward indicator by storing a reward identifier in the database associated with an identity of the user said reward identifying a promotional incentive; and

causing the user computer to connect with one of the plurality of promoter computers associated with the selected advertising image;

when the user wishes to redeem a reward, the central computer ~~providing~~allowing the user to view ~~the user computer with~~ a list of rewards associated with the user as stored in the database;

allowing the user to select a reward by interacting with the database;

redeeming the reward at the one of the plurality of promoter computers associated with the selected reward.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of expiring the redeemed reward.

19. (Currently Amended)   An interactive reward allocation and redemption method comprising:

providing a central computer coupled to a central database for storing rewards allocated to users, the central computer coupled to a computer network of user computers and promoter computers, said rewards identifying promotional incentives for purchase transactions;

if a user at a user computer selects an advertisement with a reward indicator:

(a) obtaining information to identify the user when the advertisement is selected,

(b) allocating a reward to the user in the central database, the reward associated with the selected advertisement and a promoter, without transferring the reward to the user computer, and

(c) transferring control to a promoter computer associated with the selected advertisement; and

if a user at a user computer indicates that the user desires to redeem a reward

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allocated to the user:

(a) obtaining information to identify the user,

(b) providing, from the central database to the user, a list of rewards previously allocated to the user,

(c) allowing the user to select one of the rewards in the list of rewards, and

(d) instructing the promoter to honor the reward by transferring details of the reward from the central database to the promoter.

20. (Currently Amended)   An interactive computer-controlled reward system to allow a user to collect rewards, the system comprising:

a computer network;

a user computer coupled to the computer network, the user computer enabling the user to select advertising images with associated reward indicators;

a central computer coupled to the computer network, the central computer comprising a central database, the central database storing a list of available offers, said offers identifying promotional incentives and including rewards and conditions associated with the available offers and a promoter and registered users and the rewards allocated to each user; and

a promoter computer coupled to the computer network;

wherein, when the user selects an advertising image with an associated reward indicator, control is passed to the central computer which identifies the user and automatically allocates a reward to the user without manual pre-registration of the user by the user, wherein said reward is associated with the selected image, and wherein said reward allocation is stored in the central database and not on the user computer.

21. (Currently Amended)   The system of claim 20 wherein the image is an a banner advertisement with a distinctive reward indicator logo.

22. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the computer network is the Internet, and the central computer is a webserver, and the promoter computer is a webserver.

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23. (Original) The system of claim 22 wherein the user computer includes a cookie that stores a user ID.

24. (Original) The system of claim 22 wherein control is passed to the promoter computer by the central computer after the central computer allocates a reward to the user.

25. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein control is passed to the promoter computer by the central computer after the central computer allocates a reward to the user.

26. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the user computer is an automatic teller machine.

27. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the user computer is a personal data assistant.

28. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the user computer is a point of sale terminal.

29. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the user computer is an in-seat entertainment unit.

30. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the user computer is a self-service kiosk.

31. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the user computer is a telephone with a computer chip and display screen.

32. (Currently Amended)   An interactive computer-controlled reward system to

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allow a user to redeem rewards previously collected by the user, each reward associated with a promoter and identifying a promotional incentive, the system comprising:

a computer network;

a central computer coupled to the computer network, the central computer comprising a database, the database storing a list of registered users and a list of rewards that have been previously collected by each user and that are available for redemption;

a user computer coupled to the computer network, the user computer enabling the user to select a reward for redemption from the list of rewards previously collected by the user and that are available for redemption; and

a promoter computer coupled to the computer network, the promoter computer operated by a promoter;

wherein, when the user wishes to redeem a reward, control is passed to the central computer which identifies the user and allows the user to select a reward from the list of rewards from the database on the central computer, and thereafter control is automatically passed to the promoter computer in response thereto for the user to redeem the selected reward.

33. (Original) The system of claim 32 wherein the user computer comprises a printing device to allow the user to print a reward for physical redemption.

34. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 32 wherein the image is an a banner advertisement with a distinctive reward indicator logo.

35. (Original) The system of claim 32 wherein the computer network is the Internet, and the central computer is a webserver, and the promoter computer is a webserver.

36. (Original) The system of claim 32 wherein the user computer includes a cookie that stores a user ID.

37. (Original) The system of claim 32 wherein the user can access the central computer to transfer a reward on the list of rewards to another registered user.

38. (Currently Amended) An interactive reward allocation and redemption system to attract traffic to a promoter computer, comprising:

a central database for storing rewards allocated to users;

a central computer coupled to the central database and to a computer network of user computers and promoter computers;

means, located at the central computer, for seamlessly obtaining information to identify a user;

means, located at the central computer, for automatically allocating a reward to the user in the central database if the user at a user computer selects an advertisement with an optional reward indicator, the reward associated with the selected advertisement and a promoter, said reward further identifying a promotional incentive for purchase transaction;

means, located at the central computer, for transferring control to a promoter computer associated with the selected advertisement; and

means, located at the central computer, for ~~providing~~ displaying to the user a list of rewards previously allocated to the user;

means, located at the central computer, for enabling the user to select <u>from the central database</u> one of the rewards in the list of rewards <u>by interacting with the central database</u>; and

means to instruct the promoter computer of the promoter associated with the selected reward that a valid reward has been selected for redemption by the user.

39. (Currently Amended)   The system of claim 38 further comprising means to allow a user to <u>electronically</u> transfer a reward in the list of rewards to another registered user.